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AUTHOR Wang, Aimin
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ABSTRACT

This study sought to develop a valid and reliable instrument to measure student perceptions of good college teaching from a cross-cultural perspective. A total of 63 graduate and undergraduate students from various ethnic and racial groups (Caucasian, African American, Hispanic American, and Asian American) completed a set of open-ended questions regarding their perceptions of good teaching practices and their perceptions about learning. The results of these responses were used to develop a closed-end survey questionnaire that focused more narrowly on identifying the similarities and comparing the differences in perceptions of students from different cultural backgrounds. Test-retest reliability was examined using a group of 30 students who completed the survey twice in a 2.5 week interval. A copy of the questionnaire is included. (MDM)

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DEVELOPING A MEASURING INSTRUMENT TO STUDY STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF GOOD COLLEGE TEACHING FROM A CROSS-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

Aimin Wang

Miami University

Aimin Wang

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All correspondence should be sent to Aimin Wang, Miami University, 201 McGuffey Hall, Oxford, Ohio 45056, (513) 529-2432/wanga@muohio.edu.

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to develop a valid and reliable measuring instrument to study student perceptions of good college teaching from a cross-cultural perspective. Few studies have assessed perceptions of good college teaching from students of different cultural backgrounds. This is partially because of the lack of a measuring instrument to conduct this kind of research. The present study attempted to take steps to provide researchers with a useful tool to facilitate their studies of this aspect.

Two phases of study were conducted to develop this instrument. A set of open-ended questions was used in the first phase and the results gathered from the first phase were used to develop the close-ended items in the second phase to make the instrument more focused. Content validity and test-retest reliability were examined.

The United States is changing at a rapid speed toward a multi-cultural society. According to the prediction of Corts (1994), the minority population will increase much faster than Caucasian. For example, while there will only be a 25% population increase in Caucasians from 1990 to 2030, there will be a 68% increase in African-American population and a 187% in Hispanic-American population. Understanding the needs of the students from different cultural background, therefore, becomes an increasingly important issue in college and university teachings. This in turn indicated the needs of studying student perceptions of good college teaching from a cross-cultural perspective.

Many college instructors consider teaching a college class with students from a variety of cultural backgrounds both rewarding and challenging. According to Tomic (1996), teaching in a multi-cultural classroom gives instructors the opportunity to revise their teaching methods, reappraise their curriculum, develop professional skills, and take on a student-centered approach. However, it has been suspected that people from various cultures may not hold similar expectations regarding teacher and student roles (McCargar, 1993). If a teacher uses instructional methods that are unfamiliar to the students or does not help students adjust to a new culture, he or she potentially risks having withdrawn or unhappy students because of this violation of expectations (McCargar, 1993). In multicultural classes, teachers could either become familiar with their students' expectations and use methods consistant with those expectations or help students change their expectations (McCargar, 1993). One way to do this is to develop a better understanding of how students from different cultures perceive effective teaching.

In the past, few studies have assessed perceptions of good college teaching from students of different cultural backgrounds. This is partially because of the lack of a measuring instrument to

conduct this kind of research. The present study attempted to take steps to provide researchers a useful tool to facilitate their studies of this aspect.

In 1992 Watkins and Akande indicated that although instruments measuring teaching effectiveness could be used to measure teaching effectiveness in other cultural settings, the distinct components underlying evaluations of teaching effectiveness at universities in the United States may not be the same in other cultures. Thus, while a given instrument may be reliable, it is doubtful whether there is cross-cultural validity to a model of underlying teaching effectiveness. Later in a study replicating the findings of Marsh (1993), Watkins (1994) investigated the validity of the models of teaching effectiveness developed in the United States by examining findings from six different countries of different economic, cultural, and philosophical traditions. In this study, students were asked to indicate up to five items that they considered most important for evaluating a given teacher and to indicate the items that were inappropriate for evaluating teaching. Watkins' research provided evidence supporting the reliability and appropriateness of the instruments. Furthermore, there were similar patterns of item salience and differentiation between "good" and "poor" lecturers. These results thus indicated validity of the aspects underlying the model of teaching cross-culturally.

Overall, teaching effectiveness is multifaceted and instruments focusing on a single overall score are likely to be inadequate (Watkins, 1994; Marsh, 1993; Watkins & Akande, 1992). Failure to separate components of what makes an effective instructor (e.g., organization, enthusiasm) can lead to conflicts in research findings and inadequate information for "diagnostic and decision-making purposes" (Watkins, 1994).

A study by Nadal (1980) examined the beliefs about both college student and teacher roles. Results of this study found both agreement and disagreement among subjects on belief about the

roles of teachers and students. Likewise, Bail and Mina's (1981) study on Filipino and American students found that some aspects of teacher role were agreed upon, but others differed. For example, Filipino students rated characteristics such as authoritarianism and personal appearance as significantly more important for effective teaching than did American students. Furthermore, situations in which students are given more responsibility for assignments may be confusing and perhaps somewhat negatively perceived by the Filipino student (Bail & Mina, 1981).

In assessing prior research on the topic, McCargar (1993) found American and Chinese students differed in role concepts they had about professors (Sun, 1964). Another study found that British and American teachers held different beliefs about teacher roles than Chinese students and teachers (Bergaman,1984).

In McCargar's study (1993), it was surprising to find that Japanese students indicated that teachers should encourage students to disagree with them, while Chinese and Indonesians disagreed with this idea. Other groups only mildly agreed with the statement. Such a diversity of student expectations could clearly become a barrier in classes where the open exchange of ideas is encouraged.

Tomic (1996) describes the undergraduate years as a process of stress-adaptation-growth and states that for those who also find themselves in an unfamiliar cultural environment, this process can be particularly difficult. Additionally, the emotional and cognitive development of students is as diverse as the backgrounds from which they come (Tomic, 1996). Essentially, it is the professors' responsibility to understand their students' process of acculturation to the academic community. The researchers indicate that if one is knowledgeable about similar and conflicting value orientations of certain cultures, then cross-cultural differences in perceptions of effective teaching may become predictable. This, in turn, can have significant implications for instructors

concerned with students' academic adjustment. The purpose of this study is to develop a valid and reliable measuring instrument to study student perceptions of good college teaching from a cross-cultural perspective.

Methods and Procedures of Developing This Instrument

Two phases of studies were conducted to develop this instrument. During the first phase, 63 college students, which included both graduate and undergraduate students of different cultures such as Caucasian, African-American, Hispanic American and Asian American, completed a set of open-ended questions regarding their perceptions of good college teaching practices and their perceptions about learning. Based on the results of their responses, a close-ended survey was developed to make this instrument more focused on identifying the similarities and comparing the differences on the perceptions of students from different culture backgrounds. The content validity of this instrument was examined by students' responses and the instructors with cross-cultural teaching experiences and the responses were positive. Test-retest reliability was examined by a group of 30 students who took this survey twice in a two and a half week interval. The overall test-retest reliability coefficient was about 0.9. In addition, this revised instrument has been used in several studies to compare the perceptions of Caucasian students with those of African American students and Asian students and the findings from these studies were found to be meaningful. The findings also supported much of the intuitive knowledge of the people in this field and they have been reported in professional conferences.

Description of the Measurement Instrument

Five major aspects of teaching and learning were measured in five separate sections (See attached survey):

In the first section of the survey, the subject was asked basic demographic information including continent and country of origin, ethnicity, gender, amount of time spent living in the United States, year in college, major, number of graduate and undergraduate courses completed, and current course load.

The second part of the survey contained questions on aspects of a good course, aspects of a disliked course, aspects of a good teacher, and aspects of a good student. In the initial version of the survey, open-ended questions were utilized. A content analysis was conducted on these responses and in the revised version of this survey, those most frequently stated responses were listed. Subjects were asked to read the statements and select the statements that were, in their opinion, the most important and least important statements. On the Likert scale to the right of each statement, the most important statement received a rating of "5" and the least important statement receives a rating of "1". The subject then evaluated the other statements using the most and least important statements as the standard. Any number from 1-5 could be selected for the remaining statements. The forced choice aspect of the survey encouraged a distribution of scores rather than subjects selection of all 5's or all 1's for the statements. Thus, the sensitivity of the scale was increased.

Subjects then rated from 1-7 the difficulty level experienced when completing the previous four questions. They also estimated the average number of hours spent studying each week for a three credit hour course and were asked to rate themselves on a scale from 1-7 on the kind of student they were (poor to excellent). Next, subjects indicated how much they would like an average class if the course work were doubled and how much they would like an average class if the course work were cut in half.

In the next section of the survey, students rated, on a scale of 1-7 (1=least desirable, 7=most desirable) what they wanted to get from a course (to earn an "A", easy credit, to learn the material

well, to be able to use the knowledge); what they would do if they discovered a course was going to be extremely difficult (study extra hard, drop the course, blame yourself, blame the instructor); and the major reasons a course is considered to be easy, challenging, or just right (the professor, the content, the time needed for studying, the amount of knowledge learned).

In the final section of the survey, subjects considered three major courses that they considered to be 1) easy, 2) challenging, and 3) just right. For each class, subjects specified the percentage of content they could understand when discussed in class, the percentage of the material they could learn, the percentage of the material they could understand before the exams, the percentage of the time they were frustrated in class, the percentage of courses they desired to have at that difficulty level in a given semester, and the percentage of courses at that level that they enjoyed. Subjects also indicated the number of hours needed to study for a class of that difficulty level each week, and the number of hours needed to study for an exam in that class.

Educational Importance of the Work

The educational importance of this piece of work is obvious. It is directly related to understanding students' perceptions of good teaching practice and therefore provides instructors knowledge of the expectations of their students. In addition to this practical importance, studies using this instrument will enable researchers to gather more knowledge about students' perspectives and expectations of teaching in general. The similarities and differences found in the research studies can then be used as guidelines for instructors to understand their students' needs better, quicker, and more accurately.

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Cross-cultural Perspectives of Good Teaching

Please send the completed form to:
Aimin Wang, EDP, Miami University, Oxford, OH 45056

Please circle a choice/choices in each statement or complete the statement.

- I am from [North America, South America, Africa, Asia, Europe, Australia, Other _____].
- My home country is _____.
- I am a(n) [Caucasian, Native American, African American, Hispanic American, Asian American, Hispanic, Asian, Other _____].
- I have been in the US for about _____ years and _____ months. This is about ____% of my life.
- I am a [male, female].
- I am a [1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, ___] year [undergraduate, master, Ph.D.] student.
- My major is _____.
- I have completed about _____ (# of) undergraduate courses in the US and I have completed about _____(# of) graduate courses in the US.
- I am taking _____ courses this semester/quarter.

Please follow the following steps to respond to the questions below.
1. Read all the statements under each question and select the statement that is, in your perception, the most important to the question. Circle 5 for that statement.
2. Select the least important statement. If all of the statements are very important to you, compare them and find the least important one among them. Circle 1.
3. Respond to the other statements using the above choices as your standards. You may choose any number for the remaining statements, including 1 and 5.

Aspects of a <u>good course</u>:					
• I learn a lot	1	2	3	4	5
• It is interesting and enjoyable	1	2	3	4	5
• It is applicable to my career and real-life situations	1	2	3	4	5
• It has a good instructor	1	2	3	4	5
• It has clarity	1	2	3	4	5
• Students are involved	1	2	3	4	5
• It has a good means of evaluation	1	2	3	4	5
• It is challenging	1	2	3	4	5
Aspects of a <u>disliked course</u>:					
• I do not learn much	1	2	3	4	5
• It is boring	1	2	3	4	5
• all lecture	1	2	3	4	5
• It is useless	1	2	3	4	5
• It has a poor instructor	1	2	3	4	5
• It lacks clarity	1	2	3	4	5
• There is not interaction among the students or between the students and the instructor	1	2	3	4	5
• It has unfair means of evaluation	1	2	3	4	5
• It has too much work	1	2	3	4	5
Aspects of a <u>good teacher</u>: He/She....					
• ...is knowledgeable	1	2	3	4	5
• ...is enthusiastic	1	2	3	4	5
• ...has good teaching ability	1	2	3	4	5
• ...is available	1	2	3	4	5
• ...has positive relations with students	1	2	3	4	5
• ...is flexible	1	2	3	4	5
• ...Other _____	1	2	3	4	5

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Aspects of a good student:

• Involved in learning and learning activities	1	2	3	4	5
• Motivated to learn	1	2	3	4	5
• Demonstrates effort and enthusiasm in learning	1	2	3	4	5
• Learns the material	1	2	3	4	5

- On a scale from 1-7 (1 = easy, 7 = difficult), rate the difficulty level you experienced when completing the five questions immediately above this one:
  - about a good course _____
  - about a good teacher _____
  - about a good student _____
  - about a disliked class _____
- On the average, how many hours do you expect to study each week, in addition to class time, for a three credit hours course? _____ Hours
- On a scale from 1-7 (1= poor , 7 = excellent), assume your evaluation for a course is 4. If the out-of class study time is doubled, how do your rate the course now? _____
- How do you rate this course if the out-of-class study time is cut in half? _____
- On a scale from 1-7 (1=a poor student, 7 = an excellent student), where do you place yourself? _____

Please rate each of the following statements from 1 to 7 (1 = least desirable, 7 = most desirable). You may use the same rating more than once.

- Which of the following do you want to get the most from a course?
  - To earn an A. Rate _____
  - Easy credit _____
  - To learn the material well _____
  - To be able to use the knowledge _____
  - Other (specify) _____ _____
- If you discover a course you just began is going to be extremely difficult, would you rather:
  - Study extra hard Rate _____
  - Drop the course _____
  - Blame the instructor _____
  - Blame yourself _____
  - Other (specify) _____ _____
- The major reasons that you consider a course to be easy, challenging, or just right are:
  - The professor Rate _____
  - The content _____
  - The time needed for studying _____
  - The amount of knowledge need to be learned _____
  - Other (Specify) _____ _____

Think about three courses **within your major** that you consider to be 1) easy, 2) challenging, and 3) just right for you. Rate each of them on the following aspects by filling in the blank with an appropriate percentage (question #1 to #7) or number of hours (question #8 & #9).

Example:	Easy Course	Challenging	Just Right	
I attend class about	30%	50%	20%	of the time in a semester
I spend	2	10	5	hours reading textbook in this class

Aspects	Easy Course	Challenging	Just Right	
1. I can understand				% of the content when they **are discussed in class**
2. I can learn				% of the materials **I need to learn**
3. I can understand				% of the material **before the exams**
4. About				% of the time I am frustrated in the class
5. I prefer to have				% of my courses of that difficulty level in a given semester
6. About				% of the time I look forward to attending
7. I enjoy				% of a course like that.
8. I need to spend				hours studying after the class each week
9. I need to spend				hours studying for an exam in this class

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